

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



Preserving Our Past

**Historical Society Unveils
New Cultural Heritage Center**

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Co-op Summer Outreach

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Teamwork, Reliability and Planning for the Future



Steve Tilton,
General Manager

Members,
Now that I've been with your cooperative for a few days, I've had the opportunity to get to know the team that serves you with safe, reliable electricity. It's clear they take great pride in their work and are committed to serving our members safely and efficiently.

While much of their time is spent completing long-term system improvements, such as line replacements and upgrades, those plans are often interrupted by unexpected power outages. When that happens, the team immediately shifts priorities, works together to locate the problem, and restores service as quickly and safely as possible.

A great example occurred on Thursday, July 2, just before the long Fourth of July holiday weekend. With only 30 minutes left in the workday, a call came in reporting an outage affecting a group of members. The entire crew responded without hesitation, working together to locate the fault, isolate the problem, and restore power quickly and safely. Their willingness to stay and support one another, rather than leave a coworker to handle the job alone, speaks volumes about the character and teamwork at your cooperative.

"Their willingness to stay and support one another, rather than leave a coworker to handle the job alone, speaks volumes about the character and teamwork at your cooperative."

I'm also pleased to report that this year's power sales are tracking close to historical averages and are currently on budget. Last year, favorable weather conditions provided crops with the timely moisture they needed, resulting in significantly lower irrigation usage than expected, which affected our budget. As I look out my window today, the dryland corn in the nearby field appears to be growing well—certainly better than the corn in the area where I grew up, where we hoped it would be knee-high by the Fourth

of July. It's encouraging to see electricity sales returning to expected levels.

Looking ahead, one of the major projects on the horizon is replacing our meter system and meter-reading software. Our current system has reached the end of its service life. Over the past several years, our team has extended its usefulness by obtaining replacement parts from other cooperatives that upgraded their systems earlier. That strategy has served us well, but those parts are becoming increasingly difficult to find.

As we evaluate replacement options, we're looking for a system that provides better data, helps us identify outages and other issues more quickly, and improves efficiency by reducing the need for manual meter reads when information fails to transmit back to the office.

Finally, I want to share that electric cooperatives across South Dakota have reported that members are being contacted by aggressive companies pushing home solar installations. If you are considering adding solar to your home or business, please contact our office before making a decision. We're happy to answer your questions, explain our interconnection

policies, and help ensure your system is installed safely—for both you and the line crews who maintain our electric system.

As always, I encourage you to stop by the office or give me a call if you have questions about Clay-Union or the electric industry. I look forward to getting to know our members and serving you in the years ahead.

Cooperatively,
Steve Tilton

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

CLAY-UNION ELECTRIC SPARKS

(USPS 116-800)

Office Hours
Monday through Friday
7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
31321 SD Hwy. 19, Vermillion, S.D.
605-624-2673

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Christopher Kinney, Vice President
Glen Gilbertson, Treasurer
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Asst. Secretary - Vacant

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Kobe Culver, Apprentice Lineman

POWER FAILURE – 24-hour service In case of Power Failure Call: 1-800-696-2832 or 624-2673

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This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer



Clay-Union Electric Member/Community Appreciation Day

Friday, August 14th • 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.
Clay County Fair Grounds



• Safety Demos

Hours: 10-11a.m., Noon-1p.m. 2-3p.m.

• Dunk a lineman

Hours: Noon-4 p.m.

• Bucket Rides

Hours: 11a.m.-Noon, 1-2 p.m., 3-4 p.m.

Proud sponsor of the Clay County Fair
and the 4-H groups

- Register for door prizes
- Pick up your voucher*
for the concession
stand

(vouchers only available at our booth, voucher good for Friday or Saturday, *One voucher per person, all proceeds go to the Clay Co. Fair)

Happy Work Anniversary

*Thank you for your
dedication to the
cooperative and its
members!*



Alan Gauer

Operations
Manager
39 years



Kobe Culver
Apprentice
Lineman
1 year



Lori Rueb
Senior Billing
Coordinator
33 years



As unmanned aerial systems (UAS) increasingly populate recreational and professional skies, safety remains paramount – especially near critical infrastructure such as overhead power lines. Today we reaffirm that drones should be flown in open spaces away from electrical lines and substations to prevent power outages and dangerous debris that can threaten public safety.

A drone colliding with a power line can cause outages and, if lines are downed, create serious electrical hazards for anyone nearby. Touching downed lines or debris that has fallen on fences, trees or other objects can result in severe injury or death. If you encounter downed power lines, immediately call 911 and notify emergency personnel and the utility company.

To ensure safe and compliant drone operations, follow federal registration and business-approval requirements, and stay informed about local, state and community regulations. FAA safety guidelines remain essential: Inspect your drone for damage before each flight and repair any issues prior to use. Fly at or below 400 feet unless FAA authorization or an allowed exception applies. Maintain visual line of sight; do not fly beyond it. Avoid airports, manned aircraft, stadiums and crowds of people. Do not fly for unapproved commercial purposes without FAA authorization. Refrain from flying in bad weather, including low visibility or high winds. Never fly recklessly or endanger others; violations can result in fines and penalties.

It is encouraged that drone operators plan routes

that maximize safety and minimize proximity to power infrastructure. Responsible pilots, adherence to FAA guidelines and awareness of local rules can prevent outages, injuries and potentially tragic consequences. For more information on legal requirements and best practices, consult FAA resources and your local utility providers.

Together, we can enjoy the benefits of drone technology while safeguarding our communities and critical electrical infrastructure.

As drone use expands, operators should build safety into every mission from the outset. Calibration, pre-flight checklists, and robust maintenance programs help catch issues before takeoff. Operators are encouraged to use situational awareness tools, such as real-time weather updates and wind assessments, to adjust flight plans accordingly. Community education events and outreach can foster a responsible culture among hobbyists and professionals alike, reinforcing the shared responsibility to protect power networks and nearby residents. By prioritizing safety, we preserve access to this transformative technology for all.



"Call 811 before you dig – always."

Laina Nelson, age 10

Laina reminds members to always call 811 before digging. Thank you for sharing your picture, Laina! Laina's parents are Nathan and Kristen Nelson – members of H-D Electric.

Kids, send your drawing with an electrical safety tip to your local electric cooperative (address found on Page 3). If your poster is published, you'll receive a prize. All entries must include your name, age, mailing address and the names of your parents. Colored drawings are encouraged.

Family FAVORITES

PARTY IN A PAN

Ingredients:

1 1/2 lbs. hamburger, browned
1 can cream of celery soup
1 can cream of chicken soup
1 box Stove Top Stuffing Mix
1 can corn, drained
3 cups mozzarella cheese,
shredded

Method

Combine the hamburger, celery soup and chicken soup in a bowl and set aside. Prepare the Stove Top Stuffing as directed on the box. Layer half the hamburger mixture, half the corn, half the stuffing and half the cheese; repeat layers again. Bake 30-40 minutes at 350°F or until cheese is melted. Makes 9x13 inch pan.

Kathy Zomer
Douglas Electric

WALLEYE WITH HORSERADISH SAUCE

Ingredients:

2 lbs. walleye fillets
1 cup Lawry's Herb & Garlic
marinade
1 tsp. Lawry's Season Salt
1 tsp. lemon pepper
1/4 cup butter
2 tbsp. horseradish
2 tsp. dill

Method

Marinate fish in herb & garlic marinade for 30 minutes. Drain. Sprinkle with season salt and lemon pepper. Bake fish until it flakes. Melt butter in saucepan. Remove from heat and add horseradish. Spoon onto fillet after cooked. Sprinkle on dill and serve.

Valerie Marso
Oahe Electric

BBQ MEATBALLS

Ingredients:

Meatballs

3# ground beef
1 can (12 oz.) evaporated milk
1 cup oatmeal
1 cup cracker crumbs
2 eggs
1/2 cup finely chopped onion
1/2 tsp. garlic powder
1 tsp. salt
1/2 tsp. pepper
2 tsp. chili powder

Sauce

2 cups ketchup
1 cup brown sugar
1/2 tsp. liquid smoke, or to taste
1/2 tsp. garlic powder
1/4 cup finely chopped onion

Method

Mix all meatball ingredients together and shape into meatballs. Place meatballs in a baking dish.

Mix all sauce ingredients together and pour over meatballs. Cover and bake at 350°F for one hour. The meatballs can be made ahead of time and frozen for several weeks. This makes a large batch, so it can be divided into smaller batches and frozen.

Karen Soulek
Charles Mix Electric

Please send your favorite recipes to your local electric cooperative (address found on Page 3). Each recipe printed will be entered into a drawing for a prize in December 2026. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.



August 12-15, 2026

Wednesday, August 12

- 10 am 4-H Food Stand Open
- 11-1 pm Livestock Skill-a-thon
- 3 pm 4-H Companion Animal Show
- 4-7 pm Vendor Booths Open
- 5 pm 4-H Rabbit Show
- 3-10 pm Beer Garden Tent
- 5-7 pm Balloon Twister
- 5-10 pm Inflatables
- 7 pm Mutton Bustin' & Mini Bull Showdown presented by Raise'em Rank

Mutton Bustin' Admission
Adult \$10
Youth \$5

Thursday, August 13

- 9 am 4-H Poultry Showmanship
- 10 am 4-H Poultry Show
- 12-10 pm Inflatables
- 1-3 pm Tahiti Joe Performs
- 1-7 pm Honey Bee Demonstration
- 1-8 pm Vendor Booths Open
- 3-11 pm Beer Garden Tent
- 4:30 pm Local Fare at the Fair hosted by Farmers Market
- 4:30 pm The Updraft Performs
- 5 pm Community BBQ
- 5 pm 4-H Swine Show
- 7 pm Bulls on the Bluff presented by Raise 'em Rank

Bull Riding Admission
Adult \$20
Youth \$10



For a complete schedule and more information about events, please visit

www.claycountyfair.net



Brought to you by:



Friday, August 14

- 9 am 4-H Sheep & Goat Show
- 10-5 pm Ag Day
- 10-5 pm **Clay-Union Electric Member & Community Appreciation Day**
- 12-2 pm Amy Ellsworth Performs
- 12-10 pm Inflatables
- 1-7 pm Honey Bee Demonstration
- 1-8 pm Vendor Booths Open
- 3 pm 4-H Fashion Revue
- 3-12 am Beer Garden Tent
- 4 pm Ice Cream Social
- 5 pm Great Plains Tractor Pull
- 6 pm Pizza Eating Contest
- 8-12 am Free Street Dance featuring Bluff Ridge

Tractor Pull Admission
Adult \$15
Youth \$10

Saturday, August 15

- 9 am 4-H Beef Show
- 10 am Cornhole Tournament
- 10 am Kids Pedal Pull
- 10-11 am Open Class Pie Entry
- 10-6 pm Vendor Booths Open
- 10-10 pm Inflatables
- 11-3 pm Car, Truck & Tractor Show
- 12 pm 4-H Round Robin Contest
- 12-7 pm Beer Garden Tent
- 2 pm 4-H Buddy Show
- 2-3 pm Chopped Contest
- 3 pm Pie Auction
- 4 pm Chasing the 4 of Clubs Finale
- 5 pm Arena Gates Open
- 7 pm Demolition Derby

Derby Admission
Adult \$20
Youth \$10



Photos: Jackie Williams, Clay-Union Electric and Chantelle Jungmann, B-Y Electric

BASIN BUS TOUR OFFERS MEMBERS A CLOSER LOOK AT ELECTRIC GENERATION

Members tour regional energy facilities to learn how electricity is generated, transmitted and delivered to local cooperatives.

Jackie Williams

jwilliams@clayunionelectric.coop

The second week of June, 30 members from B-Y, Clay-Union and Union County Electric Cooperatives traveled to Beulah, North Dakota, to gain a better understanding of the process involved in generating the electricity that serves their homes and businesses.

The group's first stop was in Madison, where members visited East River Electric, the cooperatives' generation and transmission cooperative. East River is the organization from which the cooperatives purchase electricity. Members were welcomed by Chris Studer, chief member and public relations officer, and Bob Sahr,

CEO, along with East River staff. The presentation focused on East River's role in supplying electricity to cooperatives throughout the region. Members also toured the Operations Department, which is staffed 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

The next morning, members departed for Beulah for their first scheduled tour at 9:30 a.m. at the Great Plains Synfuel Plant. Erin provided information about the facility and guided the group through a complete indoor model demonstrating how coal can be refined into natural gas and a variety of other products. The detailed model offered members a closer look at the complexity of the synfuel production process.

The next stop was Antelope Valley Station, with a presentation including

an overview of the control room, boilers and turbine, as well as a view of the grounds from the 17th floor. On the day of the visit, temperatures inside the plant exceeded 120 degrees on the top floor.

The final tour of the day was a bus tour through The Coteau Properties Company's Freedom Mine. Tour guide Cheri explained the process of surface mining lignite coal and described how the land is reclaimed and returned to its original state following mining operations. Members were impressed by the size and scale of the earthmoving equipment used at the mine.

On the return trip, the group traveled through Pierre, where members enjoyed lunch and toured the state capitol.

The Basin Bus Tour is offered to members every other year and is provided at no cost to Clay-Union Electric members. Clay-Union Electric remains committed to providing safe, reliable and affordable electricity now and into the future.



SOUTH DAKOTA STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

A PAST FIT FOR THE FUTURE

A new lobby welcomes visitors to the Cultural Heritage Center.

Photo by Jacob Boyko

Cultural Center & State Museum Reopens After Extensive Renovation

Jacob Boyko

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After more than two years spent closed for renovation, South Dakota's state museum and cultural center is back up and running to share the story of South Dakota and its people with visitors from across the state and beyond.

The iconic museum built into the Pierre hillside held its grand reopening July 1 in time for the nation's 250th birthday, showing off new exhibits, a gift shop and an expansion that includes a larger meeting room and more space for its archives.

For Museum Director David Grabitske, the reopening marks a new chapter for the South Dakota State Historical Society, which oversees both the museum and state archives housed there. But it also honors the first laws set forth by the Dakota Territory's first territorial legislature, outlining specific steps and functions for historical preservation for untold future generations of its citizens.

According to Grabitske, many of the

first Dakotan settlers were determined to preserve the history they were making day by day as settlers on the vast American frontier.

"The first three acts [by the territorial legislature] were all about transferring property at the end of life – it's all about inheritance," Grabitske explained. "The fourth act of the territory created the historical society. In my mind, the fourth act goes along with those first three acts; it's about how we give things to the future."

Establishing a historical society demonstrated confidence that there would be a future for the Dakota Territory – complete with a permanent population that would live, grow and prosper there.

"We have a mantra around here," Grabitske said. "We collect today for tomorrow's history."

What that sentiment has amounted to is a sprawling collection of more than 17,000 cubic feet of paper, 50 terabytes of data on its servers, and more than 35,000 individual objects.

"The very first collections that arrived were in 1863, and we still have those in our library," Grabitske said. "They were

library books – 514 of them in 11 boxes."

In the process of collecting and disseminating information, historical societies at the time would collect and make copies of books to trade with other historical societies to expand their collections and diffuse knowledge across a wider area and reduce the risk of losing records to fire.

You'll find those 160 years' worth of books, deeds, contracts and reports



On the 150th anniversary of the Battle of Little Bighorn, Curator of Collections Katy L. Schmidt holds a can found on the battlefield.

Photo by Jacob Boyko

throughout the high-ceilinged, climate-controlled archive wing of the building – but you'll also find objects that aren't necessarily old or inherently valuable.

"The reason we add something into our collection is because it's historic, and what we mean by historic is it has significance and integrity," Grabitske explained. "Something being 'old' just fixes it in time. What makes something historic is that it is significant – it tells the story of people in South Dakota, and it has integrity, which means a certain completeness to tell that story."

To illustrate the point, Grabitske described a recent addition to the museum's collection – a painted tire with the words "no hunting."

"You see these things going down the road [in South Dakota], and we realized we were missing [one for the museum]," he explained. "We found one near Timber Lake which had a story. The lady who gave it to us (family of Dorothy Dopp, courtesy of the Timber Lake & Area Museum) had put it up in 1967 and she had faithfully painted it over the years and knew the dates she had painted it. We don't need 400 of these tires – we need one to represent the whole state."

Visitors to the museum this summer can experience the first three rooms of the updated exhibits. These sections house a welcome area, 'What is History?' exhibit and a gallery. The remaining sections are slated for completion in December 2026 and will feature exhibits on South Dakota's environment, people, politics, conflicts and more.

For more information on the Cultural Heritage Center and the South Dakota State Historical Society, visit history.sd.gov.



An exhibit showcasing the famous people of South Dakota.
Photo by Jacob Boyko



This plaster doll (left) was gifted to South Dakota by Japan in 1927 to commemorate the United States' 150th birthday. Fifty years later, for the nation's 200th birthday, Japan gifted South Dakota another doll (right).
Photo by Jacob Boyko



Museum Director and South Dakota State Historical Society Assistant Director David Grabitske walks through the extensive art archive, revealing a painting of an electrical lineman working through a winter storm.
Photo by Jacob Boyko



Grabitske demonstrates the new movable shelves installed over tracks within the floor. This upgrade will maximize the available archival space.
Photo by Jacob Boyko

Clay-Union Electric Corporation Board Meeting Summary

MAY 22, 2026 • VERMILLION, SOUTH DAKOTA

The board meeting was called to order on May 22, 2026, at 8:30 a.m. by board President Tom Larsen. The meeting was held in the conference room at the Clay-Union Electric Headquarters.

In attendance were Directors Tom Larsen, Chris Kinney, Sara Schulte and Glen Gilbertson. The board seat for District #5 is vacant. Dave Stuart, Attorney, and attending staff members included John Gors, Beth Bottolfson, Alan Gauer and Jackie Williams. Incoming General Manager, Steve Tilton was in attendance.

Agenda (ACTION ITEM) – A motion was made, seconded, and carried to approve the agenda as presented.

Approval of Minutes from the April Board Meeting (ACTION ITEM) – A motion was made, seconded, and carried to approve the April board minutes held on 4/24/2026.

Approval of Minutes from the April Executive Session (ACTION ITEM) – A motion was made, seconded, and carried to approve the April executive session held on 4/24/26.

Check List & Electronic Funds Transfer – The board reviewed the EFT/ACH payments, and the monthly check list as presented.

New Members and Refunds (ACTION ITEM) – A motion was made, seconded, and carried to approve new members, refunds and credit deposits as presented.

Early Retirement of Capital Credits – A motion was made, seconded, and carried to approve the Early Retirement of Capital Credits as presented.

Contracts (ACTION ITEM) – A motion was made, seconded and approved to approve the electrical contracts as presented.

Management Reports:

Manager's Report - Manager Gors provided reports on the monthly activities:

- **June Board Meeting** – The date of June 29th, was set as the next regular board meeting to begin at 8:30 a.m.

- **Southeastern Annual Meeting** – A motion was made, seconded, and approved to authorize attendance by the board of directors to the Southeastern Annual Meeting held on June 4th, in Lennox, SD.

Administrative Report – Manager of Finance and Administration Bottolfson reviewed Billing, Collections & Customer Service, East River Electric Capital Credit Retirements, Allocation of Margins, Irrigation Season, Staking Program – Fieldsyte and April 2026 Financials reports with the board:

Operations Report – Operations Manager Gauer reviewed Monthly department work summary, new services, retired services, April outage report, service upgrades and the wiring department reports with the board:

Financial Report – Manager of Finance and Administration Bottolfson reviewed the following reports with the board:

- Balance Sheet
- Interest Income
- kWh Sales Report
- Large Power
- Line Loss
- Operating Statement
- Power Bill
- Summary of Purchased Power

All reports were posted to the website earlier for board review.

Legal Report – David Stuart, Attorney, asked for authorization to attend a SDREA Legal Seminar, July 9th, in Oacoma, SD. A motion was made, seconded, and approved attendance.

Safety Meeting Minutes – The May Safety Meeting Minutes were posted to the website for the board to review and was discussed during the meeting.

Cyber Security – The April Cyber Security report from East River IT were posted to the website for the board to review and was discussed during the meeting.

Video and/or Meeting Reports – East River Report, East River Financials and the Basin Reports were reviewed.

Calendar – The board reviewed the June 2026 calendar.

Executive Session – The board went into Executive Session at 10:48 a.m. Executive Session was adjourned at 11:45 a.m. There was no action taken.

Adjournment – There being no further business, a motion was made, seconded, and carried, to adjourn the meeting at 11:46 a.m.

Thomas Larsen, President

Sara Schulte, Secretary

Outage Reports

Cause	Date	Time	Township	Members
URD Fault	6/22/2026	6:30 a.m.	Garfield	1
Animal	6/23/2026	1:30 p.m.	Vermillion	8
Storm/Tree	6/30/2026	1:00 a.m.	Brule	4
Storm/Tree	6/30/2026	5:00 a.m.	Fairview	5

YEAR-TO-DATE FINANCIALS

	May 2026	Year To Date
Number of members BILLED	3,917	3,910
Electric & Other Revenue	\$732,278	\$4,526,391
Cost of Service	\$802,962	\$4,661,906
Operating Margins	\$(70,684)	\$(135,515)
Other Margins	\$1,896	\$48,664
Net Margins	\$(68,788)	\$(86,851)
KWH Purchased	5,054,006	37,086,998
Cost of Power	\$448,940	\$2,720,245
KWH Sales	4,844,490	35,654,134
Avg. kWhs used (residential)	974	1,304
Avg. Amount of Bill (residential)	\$167	\$200

Creativity Sparks at Clay County 4-H Create Day

Clay-Union Electric joined local youth on June 17 for Clay County 4-H Create Day, where kids explored electricity, wiring and solar panels through hands-on activities led by staff members Josh Anthofer, electrical services, and Jackie Williams, marketing and communications.

Participants built a miniature “Clay-Union Electric neighborhood” using cardboard houses they designed themselves, connecting creativity with lessons about how power helps communities work.

The day also featured painting projects, carabiner bag tags, spin-and-splatter T-shirts, terrariums, vintage paper pendant making and patriotic rag flags in celebration of America’s 250th birthday.



Photo's Courtesy of Laurie Fritsch

Office Hours and Due Dates

Our office hours are Monday – Friday, 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Please remember your **PAYMENT DUE DATE is the 20th of EACH MONTH**. Your payment must ARRIVE in our office on the 20th to avoid any penalties. Please allow mailing time as we go by the received date, **NOT the postmark**. If the 20th falls on a weekend or holiday, payment is due the following business day. If payment is still not received by the first of the following month, a \$30 collection fee will be applied and a disconnect notice will be mailed. If disconnection for nonpayment occurs, all past and current energy charges, a reconnect fee and sufficient credit deposit will be required before the meter can be reinstalled.

FOR YOUR CONVENIENCE, WE ALSO ACCEPT THESE PAYMENT OPTIONS:

Online Billing:

www.clayunionelectric.coop
Set up your user profile to manage your account, pay your bill and receive billing notification emails.

Bank Draft: Have your payment automatically deducted from your checking or savings account on the due date.

Recurring Credit/Debit Card: Have your payment automatically deducted from your card on the due date.

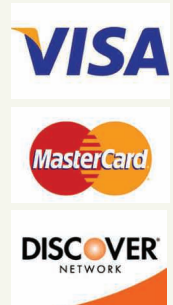
By Phone: Call in your credit/debit card payment.

In Office: We accept cash, check, money order or credit/debit card.

By Mail: Send check or money order with your payment slip.

Drop Box: Located on the right side of our main entrance at 31321 SD Hwy 19.

There are no additional fees to use any of the above payment methods.



Collection Fee	\$30
Trip Charge-Reconnect Fee	
During Business Hours.....	\$75
Dishonored Payment	\$40

Delinquent Accounts (gross rate)
10 percent on the first \$200 plus 2 percent on the balance.

CO-OP SUMMER OUTREACH

Join Us at S.D. State Fair, Dakotafest, Minn. Farmfest

Jacob Boyko

jacob.boyko@sdrea.coop

Attention all co-op members! If you're heading to the South Dakota State Fair, Dakotafest or Farmfest this summer, stop by the Touchstone Energy Cooperatives booths for some great family fun and a chance to win a prize!

Make sure you fill out your coupon on the back of this magazine and bring it with you to the Touchstone Energy Cooperatives booth at the South Dakota State Fair or Dakotafest for your chance to win one of two electric grills sponsored by Karl's TV & Appliance.

South Dakota State Fair – Sept. 3, 2026

South Dakota's electric cooperatives will host the Touchstone Energy Cooperatives booth at the South Dakota State Fair in Huron, Thursday, Sept. 3, 2026.

This one-day event will feature a slew of energy-themed activities, from bucket truck rides lifting you more than 50 feet above the state fairgrounds to an interactive pole climbing demonstration complete with real spiked boots and climbing gear that linemen use every day on the job. We've also partnered up with South Dakota One Call to remind you to always call 811 before you start digging – but your kids are welcome to use our mini excavator in our sandbox to uncover buried treasure!

While you're here, check out our on-site displays for select highly efficient, all-electric heat pumps and mini-splits, water heaters, yard tools and more!

Find our booth near the Horticulture Building.

Dakotafest – Aug. 18-20, 2026

You'll want to stop by the South Dakota Touchstone Energy Cooperatives building at Dakotafest in Mitchell, Aug. 18-20!

Join us for fresh-off-the-grill brats, oven-baked cookies and freezie pops as you learn about the latest in home energy savings and efficiency. We'll have other cool stuff for you to check out, including an automatic lawn mower, a solar panel display and an EGO Power+ Portable Power Station.

Minnesota Farmfest – Aug. 4-6, 2026

Minnesota members, come visit your electric cooperative at Minnesota Farmfest near Redwood Falls, Aug. 4-6, 2026. Members may enter a raffle drawing for one of five battery-operated yard tools. We'll even have the high-voltage trailer on site for a live demonstration to remind visitors to be safe around overhead and buried power lines.



Kids perfected their utility pole climbing skills at the South Dakota State Fair.

Photo by Jacob Boyko



Touchstone Energy Cooperatives host a booth at Dakotafest in 2025.

Submitted Photo



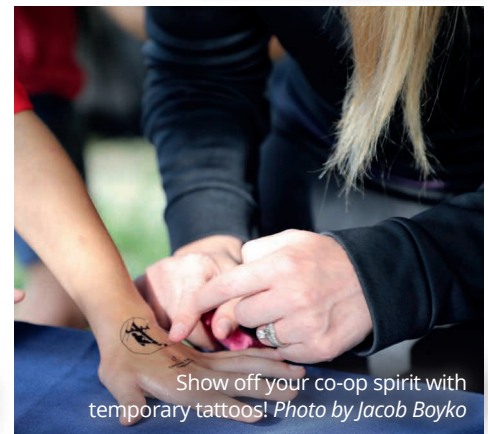
Charles Mix Electric Lineman Joe Michael shows off the bucket truck at the State Fair.
Photo by Jacob Boyko



Fairgoers get a lineman's view of the State Fair! *Photo by Jacob Boyko*



A future lineman readies for his climb.
Photo by Jacob Boyko



Show off your co-op spirit with temporary tattoos! *Photo by Jacob Boyko*



A line forms for bucket truck rides.
Photo by Jacob Boyko



Booth visitors can win prizes by playing Plinko.
Submitted Photo



THE POWER OF THE PAUSE

Sioux Valley Energy line workers take part in a job briefing before work begins. The tailgate safety discussion helps crews review the task, identify hazards and make sure each person understands the plan.
Photo submitted by Sioux Valley Energy

How Job Briefings Help Co-ops Think Through Safety

Frank Turner

frank.turner@sdrea.coop

Before an electric cooperative line crew begins work, the job starts with a pause.

The pause may only take a few minutes, but for crews working around energized equipment, changing weather and other hazards, those few minutes matter.

Before the first step of the job, line crews gather for a tailgate safety session – a documented pre-job briefing where they identify the task, hazards, protective equipment and plan.

For Travis Denison, manager of safety at Sioux Valley Energy, that conversation is one of the most important tools crews have to fight complacency.

“It forces our professionals to stop and go through the steps of the job they’re going to do and identify the hazards with each of

those steps,” Denison said.

Despite the casual name, a tailgate safety session is not a public demonstration or a quick conversation at the back of a pickup. It is a documented briefing used by crews before work begins. The goal is to slow down and communicate, making sure that everyone is focused on the work in front of them.

“These are jobs that our crews do every day, but all of a sudden something in the environment can change. There can be hazards that the crew didn’t talk about or recognize, and somebody can get hurt,” Denison said. “That job briefing or tailgate session is made to stop the crews, make them aware of their surroundings, talk about the job and each of the hazards, and discuss how they’re going to protect themselves.”

Denison’s focus on safety also runs in the

family. His brother, Joe Denison, is a loss control professional with SDREA – the same role Travis previously held before joining Sioux Valley Energy. Both came to safety work after years around line crews and firsthand experience with the risks of electric utility work.

“We were both linemen,” Travis said. “The more experienced you get as a lineman, the more you recognize the mistakes you made as an apprentice. You see the shortcuts that maybe you made yourself or that you see other linemen make.”

So how does a tailgate safety session actually work? The details change with the job, but the idea is the same: slow the job down before it starts.

For instance, if a crew is conducting a pole top rescue training, the briefing begins before anyone climbs. The crew identifies the emergency location, the people involved and who is leading the job and the protective equipment required.

Then they talk through the work itself. If the crew is practicing a mock mayday call or using a rescue manikin, they also talk through what could go wrong during the training. Someone could strain a muscle. A climber could make blunt contact with a pole or hardware. A falling object could injure someone below. Even a knife or hook could create its own hazard if people are not paying attention.

"We list the job, the steps of the job, the personal protective equipment we'll use and the energy sources," Travis said. "We talk about anything to do with the job before we start, so everybody's on the same page."

For Denison, the value of a job briefing is not limited to line crews. Members do not need a formal briefing form before starting work at home or on the farm, but they can use the same pattern to stay safe – name the job, look at the location, identify the equipment involved and talk through what could go wrong.

At home, that might mean looking up before raising a ladder, checking for power lines before trimming trees or calling 811

before digging a post hole, planting trees, building a deck or installing a sign.

That message is especially important on the farm, when large equipment may operate near overhead power lines.

"Be aware of the power lines," he said. "Have that talk. Communicate. Make the people you are working with aware of the potential dangers around them."

Sioux Valley Energy has also worked to carry that message to members through radio ads, videos and public outreach. The cooperative has shared reminders about overhead power lines, green boxes, construction work and the importance of locating underground utilities before digging. At times, Sioux Valley Energy has also partnered with Southeastern Electric Cooperative on public safety messaging.

Denison said the goal is similar to a crew's tailgate session: get people thinking before something goes wrong.

"Think about what you're doing," Denison said.

SDREA - Job Briefing			
Aerial Unit Testing			
Cooperative: <u>Thompson Center Coop</u>	Date of the Testing: <u>6-30-26</u>	Cooperative System Location: <u>L24C72</u>	
Emergency Location: <u>Substation #440</u>	Temperature: <u>76</u>	Humidity: <u>68%</u>	Voltage: <u>7200</u>
<u>Section 14 Township-112N Range-48west</u>			
Type of Personnel Involved:			
☒ Line Superintendent	☒ Lead Lineman	☒ SDREA Loss Control:	☒ Foreman
☒ Journeyman	☒ Groundman	☒ Contractor	☒ Apprentice
Work Procedures:			
☒ Person In Charge of the Aerial Unit Testing:	<u>N/A</u>	☒ Set Up Traffic Control Devices if Necessary	☒ Position Aerial Unit Next to Energized Line
☒ Safe Location for Testing	☒ Ground Each Truck to System Neutral	☒ Inspect the Aerial Unit Boom Condition	☒ Install Skarshaug Tester
☒ Competent Aerial Unit Operator Identified	☒ Aerial Unit will be tested for 3-5 minutes	☒ Competent Ground Personnel Identified	☒ Rubber Gloves Shall be Worn by both
☒ Removal of the Truck Ground from System U	☒ Retrack Boom to de-energizing test unit	☒ Repeat for the next Aerial Unit	☒ Remove Skarshaug Tester from Boom
Personal Protective Equipment			
☒ Truck Grounds	☒ Work Area Protection Devices <u>out of Right a Way</u>	☒ Rubber Gloves	☒ Hot-Sticks
☒ Safety Glasses	☒ High Visibility Vest	☒ Flagger Personnel	☒ Aerial Unit Tester
☒ Hard Hats			
☒ Strobes or Beacons			
Special Tools & Equipment Required			
☒ Aerial Unit Tester	☒ Spotting Scope	☒ Stop Watch/Watch	
Potential Hazards			
☒ Contact Energized Lines with Equipment	☒ Vehicular Traffic	☒ Discharge of Hot or Burning Oil	
Energy Source Control			
☒ Substation	☒ Sectionalizer	☒ OCR	☒ Installed 1 Shot
☒ Fuse Cutout	☒ SCADA	☒ Electronic VFI	☒ Other: _____
Personal at Job Site			
Signature	Signature	Signature	Signature
<u>Joe Denison</u>	<u>Brad Rehner</u>		
<u>Danley Swartz</u>	<u>Tony Surana</u>		
<u>Billy Bob</u>	<u>Lynna Beckel</u>		
<u>Heath Church</u>	<u>Larry Hardin</u>		
<u>Jaime Pike</u>	<u>Derek Donson</u>		

This mock SDREA job briefing form, created for illustration, shows how line crews may document pre-job planning before aerial unit testing. The example highlights the kinds of details crews review before work begins, including location, personnel, work procedures, protective equipment, tools, energy controls and potential hazards.

REGISTER TO WIN!

Bring this coupon and mailing label to the Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives booth at Dakotafest or the South Dakota State Fair to win a prize!

Your Phone Number: _____ Dakotafest – Find us in the Touchstone Energy Building!
Your Email Address: _____ S.D. State Fair – Find us in the Horticulture Park!



AUG. 18-20
Dakotafest
2300 E. Spruce St.
Mitchell, SD

To have your event listed on this page, send complete information, including date, event, place and contact to your local electric cooperative. Include your name, address and daytime telephone number. Information must be submitted at least eight weeks prior to your event. Please call ahead to confirm date, time and location of event.

JULY 31-AUG. 2
Sioux River Folk Festival
Newton Hills State Park
Sioux Falls, SD
SiouxRiverFolkFest.com

AUG. 1-2
Family Camping Weekend
Prairie Village
Madison, SD

AUG. 4-6
Farmfest 2026
8 a.m.-4 p.m.
Morgan, MN
Ideagroup.com/Farmfest

AUG. 5
Ag Appreciation Day
11 a.m.-1 p.m.
Sioux Empire Fair
Sioux Falls, SD

AUG. 7
Raise Em' Rank Bull Riding & Breakaway Roping
Geddes, SD
605-680-2763

AUG. 8-9
South Dakota Senior Games
Events for People Ages 50+
Huron, SD
Register by July 26
605-295-2039

AUG. 13-15
Clay County Fair
Vermillion, SD

AUG. 14
Member/Community Appreciation Day
Clay County Fair
Vermillion, SD

AUG. 21-23
Yankton Riverboat Days & Summer Arts Festival
Yankton, SD
605-665-1657

AUG. 22
Extreme Bull Riding Tour
7:30 p.m.
Yankton Rodeo Grounds
Yankton, SD
605-760-4217

AUG. 22
McCrossan Boys Ranch Xtreme Event Challenge
3:30 p.m.
McCrossan Boys Ranch
Sioux Falls, SD
605-339-1203

AUG. 27-30
Steam Threshing Jamboree
Prairie Village
Madison, SD

SEPT. 1-6
20th Annual Sturgis Mustang Rally
Sturgis, SD
SturgisMustangRally.com

SEPT. 3
Touchstone Energy Cooperatives at the South Dakota State Fair
9 a.m.-5 p.m.
State Fairgrounds – Horticulture Park
Huron, SD
605-224-8823

SEPT. 11-12
Center of the Nation 9/11 Remembrance
6 p.m. Fri: Remembrance Walk
Sat. 8 a.m.-4 p.m.: Blood Drive
Herrmann Park
Belle Fourche, SD
605-641-3245

SEPT. 12
The Hay Country Jamboree
7 p.m.
Gayville Hall
Gayville, SD

Note: We publish contact information as provided. If no phone number is given, none will be listed. Please call ahead to verify the event is still being held.